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# **AN EMBLEM OF EMPIRE**

BY

**FRANK BUFFINGTON VROOMAN**  
B. Sc. (Oxon.) Ph. D., F.R.G.S.


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## AN EMBLEM OF EMPIRE



IT IS IMPOSSIBLE for any mere Londoner to experience the sense of loss, not to say of utter vacuity, which oppresses the average Imperial peripatetic, when, for the first time (and, perhaps, for all times thereafter), he goes to his Imperial Mecca, as every right-minded, outlying Briton hopes to do at least once before he dies, and failing this, some, I dare say, hope to do afterwards. How many have been the thousands and tens of thousands, and for how long a time have these denizens of the Outer Empire made their pilgrimages over land and sea, to the opaque atmospheres of their holy places, only with a sense of bitter disappointment, to wander helplessly and hopelessly looking for a shrine. We have gone to the Abbey, or St. Paul's, and have been subdued by the architectural emblems of a Nation's aspirations—built in stone. We have gone to Westminster, and have found the noble piles which stand as emblems of the gifts of Magna Charta, realized in representative government—that is to say, representative for the space of a few hundred miles from its storied walls. We have gone to the grey and smoky city, and with more or less of awe have looked upon the flat and smudgy building whose roof covers the hoards of England, and we have been inclined to reverse the ancient saying of a good book, and declare that “where the heart is, there the **treasure** is also.” We have stood under the shaft of Trafalgar, and we have looked up to the mute figure of one

whose voiceless message in that one battle on the sea won the Outer Empire for Britain, and that one ship determined that battle, and that was the ship which held Nelson.

Here in the busy and ancient Capital are a few of the Nation's reminders which our forebears have petrified, as it were, and passed on in silent forms of stone to the generations which have followed them—"Lest we forget."

But the Empire is without a Home. It is without monument or symbolism. It is without sign or emblem. There is no one Thing upon the face of the earth symbolical of Imperial Unity of Imperial dignity. We have neither song nor dream nor poem which a Sir Christopher Wren might have wrought into some deathless form to stand in place of the Great Emptiness, and which once and for all, and now and for all time might utter the aspirations of the Democratic Imperialism of the British race, and which might become the greatest imaginable factor in the creation and culture of the "Empire habit of mind." It is a significant oversight that before the brilliant conception of Lord Grey, no Briton had ever before dreamed the dream to enshrine in some form of imperishable beauty the adequate Emblem of that larger dream of the British race which has found reality in the greatest political aggregation the world has ever seen.

If the British Empire, then, is a reality, and if there is such a thing as Imperial unity, or if there ought to be, is it less than tragic that the world is confronted with evidence of the Empire's loose-jointedness and of the inorganic juxtapositions of so many of its unrelated parts, and that there is no

substantial and concrete evidence in the Imperial Capital of that organic unity which marks the direction and aim of our present development?

And is it not sufficiently obvious that those benefits are incomparable which will accrue to Imperial organization in the psychological aid, at the psychological moment, to be given in the organization under one palatial roof of its official and economic and political insignia? In the focussing in one architectural masterpiece of the aims and hopes and aspirations of Britannia Overseas?

The visiting Briton has nothing to complain of in the hospitality accorded to him on the part of his London kinsman. He has joined the clubs and institutes of the metropolis, and these, while not altogether inclusive, have interests and connections as wide as the Empire itself. But Vacuity itself, gaping wide, has everywhere stared him in the face where the great Imperial Thing ought to be. There has been nothing to appeal to his Imperial consciousness—nothing to satisfy his Imperial pride. And, after all, it is something to create and nourish the "Empire habit of mind;" is it not also very much worth while to appeal to the Imperial imagination—something to cultivate also the pride of Empire?

The Britannic Dominions are growing more rapidly than our thought of them. Our very deeds are overtaking our wildest dreams. Time and circumstance are tumbling over each other in the mad race of modernity and this poor halting and conservative intellect of ours is only half making up its mind to follow and see what the blind god Chance is doing with us. We have something to do in keeping up with events, but we have more to do if we are

to understand and guide them. One thing is certain: we are growing in wealth and population and importance and pride. We are beginning to applaud the orators who stand up and tell us we are no longer negligible. We subscribe for the papers which make discourse upon the significance of our waxing wealth and power. But then we know already that we have not stopped growing and have had no intention of stopping. Whatever may be the satisfaction with which we view the prouder eminences of our most praiseworthy achievements it is negligible besides the smile we wear when we contemplate what we are going to do. Imagine, then, the jolt at our sorest place when we are suddenly arrested upon the streets of London—one begs to state here that it is not a confirmed habit of ours to be arrested on the streets of London—but I remember distinctly having several times been arrested by some little grocer's window in the Strand or Trafalgar Square or elsewhere with a British Columbia or Ontario or Rhodesian exhibit—or indeed a Dominion of Canada exhibit, all very useful in their way, no doubt, but which I venture to say the green-grocers of Moose Jaw or Medicine Hat would eclipse without a struggle, and take the blue ribbon from the agricultural committees of any county fair on the North American continent. If it is not a few barrels of apples or a pile of pumpkins or a stack of straw, it will be a row of bottles full of preserved fruits which will remind you of the shelves upon which you have just seen the pickled baby monkey in the Medical Museum.

If we have occasion to go to the offices of the Lord High Commissioner of the Great Dominion of

Canada we may find them in dingy quarters happily hidden "far from the madding crowd."

After playing a game of blind man's buff with several remote advertisements, a guide book and four policemen, you have found it—and what have you found? Something to make you proud of your country, no doubt. Well, yes, if you have found the Commissioner in. He would dignify a smoky teepee, and a red blanket on the wildest shores of Hudson's Bay. But it is not likely that we shall be served so forever, for there is but one Strathcona. But there are plenty of financial or commercial institutions in the ninth rate towns of the Canadian prairie whose managers are better housed. Life is too short to indulge the luxury of the computations necessary to give any one a clear idea of how long it would take an average British Columbian visiting in London, if he really wanted to find out something about the Empire, to locate and make the rounds of the several offices and exhibits and headquarters of the Dominions and Provinces and Dependencies, which some day some enterprising visitor may be bold enough to do. Of course, nobody thinks of visiting his Dominion or Provincial "headquarters" when in London unless there is something like necessity for so doing. The consequence is a profound ignorance on the part of most of us as to what the rest of the Empire is doing and hoping to do, except when we read in a few of the papers interested in the subject, and except for the intermittent potato piles and the desultory squash.

What a pitiful exhibition of the Imperial pride and consciousness! What an anti-climax for all our vain-glory! Behold the note and token of our Im-



perial consciousness! Have we not put our talent in a napkin—and a paper one at that?

Earl Grey describes the scheme for creating the building in Aldwych, and outlines his ideas of the form it should take:

“The Dominion House should rival in grandeur the Houses of Parliament. At one time it appeared desirable that the building should culminate in a dome, for the dome is the architectural symbol of the Church and of the Empire. The idea of the dome of Empire resting firmly upon the foundation of the four self-governing Dominions was singularly attractive. Apart, however, from the inadvisability of erecting a new dome in competition with the noble dome of St. Paul’s, a little reflection showed that, as the building should be devoted to practical purposes, and as a dome lends itself rather to contemplation than to economic use, the building might more advantageously culminate in a huge British central tower, like the Victoria Tower of Westminster, which, 100 or 120 feet square, might rise from the centre of the roof.

### Roof Garden

“The roof might be a flat one, and it might be converted into a two and one-half acres of roof garden, which, situated 100 feet above the turmoil of the Strand, would become one of the greatest attractions of London. This central tower might be used for the purpose of an hotel in which the official representatives of the Dominions might have preferential rights.

“Ambassadors are able to entertain and lodge Kings and Emperors at their official residences. The

Dominion representatives should be able to dispense hospitality to the most eminent men whom they wish to honor.

“This huge palatial building would have to meet not only the office requirements of the Dominion Governments and of the great commercial corporations of the Dominion, but it should also become a great Imperial business centre and Intelligence Department, a social centre or club, a clearing house of Imperial thought, and an important connecting link between the Motherland and the great Daughter States.

“It should contain a spacious banqueting chamber, a theatre and lecture hall, a good library and reading room. The theatre and lecture hall might serve the important purpose of spreading a better knowledge of the Dominions among the British people by suitable entertainments. On the ground floor of the building there might be permanent and temporary exhibitions of Dominion produce, which should stimulate business between Great and Greater Britain.

“The Dominion House, lying in the very centre of London, would attract not only the serious student, but also the casual passer-by. Its beauty and grandeur would arrest his attention and induce inquiry. Strolling up the Strand on the way to the theatre, National Gallery, the Houses of Parliament, or St. Paul’s Cathedral, he would be arrested by that magnificent building; he would enter it, and the pictures, diagrams, and the exhibits of Dominion produce displayed would give him a good idea of the Dominions, and if he should be a business man, that short visit might lead to business.

### Commercial Museum

"The Dominion House would not only serve as a connecting link between the Dominion producers and home consumers. It would also serve as a commercial museum and as the information office for British manufacturers. The two-and-a-half-acre basement might contain a permanent exhibition of the manufactured articles sold in the Dominions, such as hardware, machines, electrical fittings, wearing apparel, etc., including particularly articles now sold by foreign countries.

"London is so poor in great architectural monuments that it would be a calamity," concludes Lord Grey, "if the opportunity of acquiring this unique site, and of erecting thereon a monument of Empire should be lost, if on the site should spring up a gaudy international hotel, or an assembly of theatres and shops. I see in the vacant Aldwych site a great Imperial opportunity, which, once lost, will be lost forever."

The project of the Dominion House involves the establishment over and above all else of a Centre of Welcome, as the Daily Telegraph felicitously phrases it, which should be the architectural masterpiece of the British Empire.

Here upon two and one-half acres and under one roof it is proposed that the Empire erect a structure which may be the home not only of all the officialdom of Dominions and Provinces, but of a permanent exhibition of the products of the Outer Empire and of the industries of the home land. Here, doubtless, would be one place to which any Britannic visitor might go and read the paper from his own home town or write a letter in a place of his own on some-

thing of his own, to those also who own it far, far away. Vastly more than an Imperial Department Store would be the aggregation of raw materials and finished products, and samples of the natural resources from all the outlying British possessions. Among other things this would be to all intents and purposes a Museum of the Economic Geography of the Empire, and as well an Imperial Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce. Here on the same two and a half acres also would be housed all the Lord High Commissioners. Here would be all the Agents General, all the Emigration and Immigration Commissioners, and, let it be hoped, room enough for a Commissioner of "Migration Within the Empire," awaiting the day when we are intelligent enough to realize its imperative need. Here might all the Royal Commissions sit which are to deal with purely Imperial subjects and interests. Here, too, let there be a noble hall for the first Imperial Parliament and the Imperial Government (should we ever have one) and should we not after all determine to move the Capitol of Empire to Vancouver.

In Lord Grey's project of the Dominion House is to be found a response to a long-felt need, the importance of which no man can minimize and the utility of which only time can demonstrate. Rather let us say that there is the fulfilment of an Imperial necessity in this synthetic idea, on both the sentimental and economic side, to which it would be as difficult to find one valid objection as it would be to count the substantial arguments that might be brought forward to justify its realization.

It is an anomalous situation that long before this we have not had just such an Imperial Housing. I am sure that we out here are not the only ones who

are not proud of the *disjecta membra*, the confusion and circumfusion in the Imperial Capital of the scattered and undignified representations of our Imperial life; nor are we the only ones to whom it has occurred that we have condoned these unmistakable conditions of racial inefficiency.

This one aspect of the project should appeal to us, then, with the greater cogency, the more we think about it, and that is the organization and centralization of headquarters as sympathetic with the idea of the organization and centralization of Empire. And when I speak of the centralization of Empire, I hasten in this modification to insist that with centralization must always be local autonomy and Imperial representation. When this is admitted, and understood, let us then admit and understand that the Empire cannot exist without organization and centralization. Perhaps, if there is any one idea more than another which is responsible for the direction of the greater movements of modern politics and economics, as well, it is the idea of synthesis. Everywhere we see springing up as if from seed widely sown, the practical fruits of the idea that more is to be accomplished in the world from union than through separation; more by working together than by working against each other; more in the organization and co-relation and co-ordination of parts, in the elimination of unnecessary waste, and in the addition of that utility and efficiency which comes from aggregation of assets, and from united effort, than from the unintelligent methods which for so long have found their expression in the *laisson-faire* doctrines and methods of an inefficient age which, when the rest of the world was less efficient, enabled our race to "muddle through."

There is no man, probably, in the British Empire, to whom it has not occurred, and upon whom it is not thrust with growing insistency, that the vital Imperial problem of the moment is a more efficient organization of all the assets of Empire, and this involves an accurate knowledge of our palpable weaknesses no less than a realization of the pressing need of a" our available strength. Without doubt we are losing the hardness that made the race of men that made the British Empire.

We are overwhelmed with the luxury of long and unquestioned success, and success is enervating, and we are losing the iron in our blood, and the initiative which has made our race what it is. We are taking too much for granted. We are saying to ourselves "Things always have been so, and, therefore, they always will be so." There are serious movements afoot in the Outer Empire that call for closer organization and a more efficient Imperial life. No close observer can fail to be aware of the presence in the Dominions, and, indeed, in Great Britain itself, of those widely spread centrifugal forces, which have been bequeathed to us by an age of individualism, and which are none the less real because they have not yet found a cogent voice. In the matter of what I might call real Imperial patriotism, also, we are taking too much for granted, but in addition to this there is something more dangerous yet in the apathy on the part of large numbers who academically assent to Imperialistic opinions, and every few weeks applaud the speakers at the Canadian Clubs. It is impossible for Great Britain to realize the extent to which the most of the people of the new self-governing states are absorbed in narrow and selfish tasks of their own muck-raking pursuits, and

on the theory that two bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time, these honest folk are losing public spirit and patriotism by sheer force of their being crowded out by meaner things. The new watchwords of Britannia just now should be: Organization, and Efficiency, and Duty, and whatever will tend to give tangible form to these ideas will be of vital use to the Empire.

Notwithstanding the reproach of that good book which inveighs against the generation which "seeketh after a sign," there are some elements in the minds of most of us (or left out of them), which seek and need—a tangible shape with which to enform our vaguer thoughts. We want pegs to hang our thoughts on. We want symbols to clothe our aspirations in. The art instinct in us not only impels us to form and frame the essence of our spiritual life, but we have not ceased to draw certain inspiration from what other men have thought and formed and framed. "There is no more welcome gift to man than a new symbol," says Emerson, and this Lord Grey offers us. It is time we had it. Such an opportunity has come our way but once, and doubtless will never come our way again in the singular appropriateness of location, and in the apt coincidence of time and need. It is, withal, so simple, so obvious, so appropriate and so timely, that perhaps our first emotion is a wonder that no man ever thought of it before—this Emblem of Empire—this parable in stone of Imperial Unity and Efficiency.

Lord Grey offers us what Emerson called the "New Symbol." It is the symbol of Imperial Efficiency through Imperial Synthesis. The very essence of Empire is unity—not uniformity, but organic unity—and the Emblem of Empire must

spell unity. Separation is the instinct of the individualist and no individualist can be a consistent Imperialist. It is not consonant with the spirit of Empire to get as far away from each other as we can. The spirit of Empire is getting together. If it all means anything—this Empire of ours—and if there is one thought underneath and through it all it is the thought of mutuality rather than division—co-operation rather than competition—synthesis rather than diffusion. In short, Imperial efficiency is based upon the centripetal and not the centrifugal idea. In these days of expansion and dispersion, not to say disintegration, I know of nothing that more completely can meet the present Imperial need, or work toward a more comprehensive Imperial purpose than the central organization and co-relation and housing of the scattered ends of our Imperial life and thought and giving to these “airy nothings” a “local habitation and a name.” And I am sure that the Empire for all time to come would hold premiers and governments responsible, should they, from any personal or other motive, attempt to block or even thwart the realization of this pressing Imperial necessity. The time has come for us to adopt some new watchwords and perhaps some new ideas. Let us admit it at once, and get ready to meet it—a new era is upon us. Revolutionary changes are in the air, for new and fundamental ideas have taken possession of the great majorities of the world. The new problems which confront us are those that can be grappled with only by larger aggregations of money, men, and power. Organization and efficiency are the watchwords of the hour, and “muddling through” is a fetish of the past. The problems of Empire are so urgent—so critical out here on the new Pacific—that we of all



men cannot without protest afford to fly in the face of so conspicuous a Providence. There are said to be two sides to every question, but we must make exceptions of the categorical imperative, and Lord Grey's project. For it is not more certain that two and two are four than that, if the British Empire is to fulfil its purpose, the slipshod methods of irresponsible scatteration must retire before the spirit of getting together.

I want to say to you, Gentlemen, that this project is one which vitally concerns the permanent interests of British Columbia. Here in Vancouver we understand, or ought to understand, that we have no time to lose in overtaking and guiding the ominous world-movements of the Pacific Ocean. Here is where the Empire will be lost or won. Here is where we are to decide whether the white or yellow man is to be supreme upon this vast water. Here the scattered threads of world politics are to be gathered up and woven into the fabric of Empire, and here is where history shall say, if this is not done and done at once, that the Empire was lost to the British race. We are facing a critical moment in our own development at this present time, and we ought to know what we do in the next few years out here—what we do for and with the Empire is likely to change or settle the direction of events for centuries to come. In proportion as we realize the solemnity of the issue, shall we be able to grasp the significance of any and every factor which will in greater or less degree help to synthesize the assets of Empire, organize our trade in the mutual interests, gather together and bind our racial enthusiasms into one efficient whole, and prepare ourselves for the task, whatever it may cost us, of establishing our free institutions upon the empty

places of our inheritance and making that land now occupied by Britons free land forever.

Outside, perhaps, the defences of the Pacific Hemisphere, I know of no single factor that more efficiently will promote the realization of the dream of our race, which is the boldest dream of any race; or that will do more toward the vital unification of our Empire, which is the proudest Empire this planet ever has held together; or that more effectually will conserve the moral power of Anglo-Saxon institutions, which certainly have righteously prevailed over a wider reach of earth and sea than those of any other race or age; than this living and perpetual Emblem of synthesis of all the elements of Empire—this fundamental and architectonic idea of the man whom the Empire respects for his conspicuous abilities, loves for his human sympathies, and trusts for his spotless honor. I repeat that the British Empire will hold responsible the man or men who make the blunder or commit the crime of thwarting this Empire building scheme against which only interests and not arguments can avail. Here is an appeal with a moral sanction. There is here a call of duty, to which, thank God, the British race has not yet ceased to respond. It is the call of province to province—Dominion to Dominion—Briton to Briton—let us get together, let us no longer drift apart. We want a definite centre for our vague circumferences. If it is true, as Longfellow has said, that “each man’s chimney is his golden milestone—the central point from which he measures every distance,” how true will it be for the pioneer building for Anglo-Saxon ideals in the Empire’s widest reaches, that every distance for him will be measured to the centre of his racial organization in that “golden milestone”

which, let us hope, Lord Grey will realize for us. Frankly, we are not proud to be known and measured by the few dingy lofts and corner groceries scattered and lost in the bewildering aggregation of seven millions of people. Let us have the "Golden Milestone." Let us have the House of Welcome. Let the Empire have a Home. To whom in all the Empire in this generation would we more readily follow or more implicitly trust? To whom would we more gladly yield our grateful tributes for that stroke of sympathetic insight which I am sure is to give us that one Imperial Thing, the very naming of which provokes our wonder that we have been so long without it. That was a great service Lord Grey rendered the Empire when he put forward the plan for the Dominion House. "To give to human minds the direction which they shall retain for ages," says Macauley, "is the rare prerogative of a few Imperial spirits." Lord Grey may yet prove the truth of the old saying that "a moment of inspiration is worth a lifetime of experience."



After the above address, Dr. Vrooman presented the following resolution, which was very happily seconded by Mr. Alfred Buckley, M.A. The resolution was unanimously adopted.

**BE IT RESOLVED:—**

That the Progress Club of Vancouver heartily and unanimously endorses the project known as the Dominion House on the Aldwych Site in London, and that it recommends that the trade and professional organizations, Provinces, Dependencies, and

Dominions of the Empire support it in the possible way on the grounds set forth by . . . , that it would enable:—

(1) The Governments of the . . . governing Dominions and of their States and Provinces to concentrate on one central site their offices, now widely distributed in different parts of London.

(2) The attention of the home consumer to be effectively and impressively focussed on the products of the Dominions Overseas.

(3) The manufacturers of the United Kingdom to ascertain and to meet the requirements of Greater Britain.

